The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

EDITORS: L. P. JACKS, M.A., AND JOSEPH WOOD.

VOL. IV. NO. 7. SEPTEMBER, 1896. ONE PENNY.

Work and Play.

"Oh why did you call me, mother!
I was sitting beside the stream,
And watching the play of my sailing-boat
As she danced in a bright sunbeam,
And I tossed the pebbles in, one by one,
Till the water grew strong and high—
Then I cheered and cheered, till I almost feared
I should anger old Bessy hard by.

"But, mother! why will you sit and sew
Through the whole long summer day?
You'll come and look at my sailing-boat
As she rides in her miniature bay?
And when I'm a man, and at sea, mother,
I'll not let you sit and sew,
But build you a ship, where the men, mother,
Shall cheer us wherever we go!

"But I cannot now stay if you won't, mother,
For I promised our Harry, at three,
To meet him down by the Squire's walk
To climb the old chestnut tree;
And I hear it's two by the Minster clock,
And my 'top mast' not yet done;
But half-an-hour will finish that—
So—a kiss! and hurrah for a run!"

And the boy returned to his sailing-boat,
While the mother's eyes grew dim
With tears—to think of the coming years,
When she could not work for him;
And the coat is worn—and the coat is torn—
And a ship rides out of the bay;
But mothers must weep till they fall asleep,
And work while the children play!

F. ROCHAT.

The Choice of Books:

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH,

BY REV. L. P. JACKS.

We live in an age when books may be counted one of the most important agencies in the formation of character. This has always been true of the people who had the time and the capacity to read. But now everyone reads, or can read—and this makes all the difference. Books are becoming more and more a democratic institution. Once they were the property of the learned; they served to mark off the character of the reading class from the non-reading class; now they play a part in the lives of all classes.

For this reason the pulpit cannot afford to be silent about them. If it is the business of preachers to deal with all the agencies which form character, and to distinguish the false and the true uses to which those agencies may be put, it is certainly their duty to think very carefully about this matter, and to give their congregations the results of their thoughts.

It may occur to you that the subject of the choice of books is not of interest to all, but only to some. Only those who have time for reading, and a liking for it as well, can have any possible concern with this matter. But beyond them there is the class of those who have neither the time nor the liking. They surely can derive no benefit from any sermon that can be preached on this subject.

But let me say at the outset that, while I fully admit that there are some persons to whom this may apply, yet I am sure there are not so many of them as is commonly supposed to be

the case. No doubt the people who can spend most of their time among books form a comparatively small class. But these are not the only people to whom the subject is important. If a man is able to spend an hour a day in reading, or only half-an-hour, then a proper knowledge of what makes a good book, and what makes a bad one is of the first consequence to that man. The less time we have for reading the more important it is that we should know what is the most profitable way of spending it. The fewer books we read, the greater our need that those books should be good. I go further: a man who reads little will often derive a greater benefit from books than another man who reads much. The mind of a great reader is often like a museum filled with stuffed specimens of all kinds of beasts and birds, but containing no single thing which has the breath of life in it. But a healthy mind ought to be like the broad fields of nature, where each living thing retains its natural vitality, quivering with the joy of life, and propagating itself according to its kind. For this end a little reading will often be more effectual than much. It broadens the mind without deadening it.

Besides, one hour a day is by no means to be despised as an opportunity for doing great things with books. If we make a regular habit of giving even half that amount of time to steady and attentive reading—and a great deal depends on it being attentive—in ten years we shall have achieved some of the best results of self-culture. A man who has thoroughly digested the matter so read, will certainly stand at a very high intellectual level, both as regards information and literary taste. I venture to say that many men who have won foremost places as specialists in one department or another, and become known as brilliant writers, and perhaps as masters in their peculiar line, would be found, if we could make the examination, to have spent very little, if any more than an average of one hour per day, in the actual reading of books. It is not the mere reading that makes any man proficient, but the thinking over what one has read. John Stuart Mill, for instance, accomplished the greater part of his intellectual labours, which, I suppose, may be reckoned among the greatest of modern times, while occupying an important official position at the India House, and most of the profound thinking, of which his books are the outcome, was done while walking every day to and from the office. The moral is, that a person with only half-an-hour a day for reading —I mean reading books as distinct from newspapers—ought to carefully study the question how to spend that time in the best possible manner. If he solves the question rightly, there is no reason why he should not become, in the course of time, a man of well-informed and highly-trained intelligence; a man of sound taste and thorough master of one or more important subjects. Persons who have little time for reading are apt to think that the most they can do is to acquire just that smattering of this or that, which will enable them to understand what other people are talking about. On the contrary, if they use that little time well, and form a habit of using it in one way, they will not only create for themselves delightful and perennial interests, but they may even become authorities in their several subjects.

Now we are all familiar with the distinction between reading for pleasure and reading for profit. But that turns out to be a distinction without any real difference. You rarely read to any profit unless you read with pleasure. And if you read avowedly for pleasure, you can very easily turn it to profit. For example, there is an enormous class of persons addicted to novel reading, who read nothing but novels. Now, if only those persons *would*, they *could* turn their novel reading to the best account. They could derive from it an intellectual and moral training of the highest value. They could greatly deepen their insight into human life, and in that way learn tolerance and liberality and charity to all sorts and conditions of men. I do not say that this is the usual result of novel reading. A person who skims through one novel after the other, reading only for the sensation, and often caring most for the worst kinds of sensation, will derive no benefit from it, but rather harm. But the moment we go beyond the mere sensation to interest in the different characters of the novel, then novel-reading begins to educate. Our circle of acquaintances is enlarged by the imaginary men and women of the book; we love and hate, admire and despise, and that is a process which humanizes us. Moreover, if we become interested in the author

as well as in the book, so that we can put ourselves at the author's point of view, and watch his mind as it evolves the imaginary inspirations of the book, then, unconsciously, we learn a great lesson in sympathy—a lesson in the power of seeing with other people's eyes as well as our own. Further, if our love of novels is so great that we are led thereby to make a study of the fiction of our own or any other country, we shall become acquainted with some of the profoundest questions of the human mind. One of the most suggestive and enlightened men I ever met, was one whose special study had taken that form. A great insatiable novel reader to begin with, he had ended by becoming a student of the novels of all countries, and in the course of his studies, he had found the door opened into all the great departments of human life, so that there were few subjects of deep interest in which his novel-reading did not enable him to throw some keen and brilliant light. We cannot all carry the study the length that he did; but when I hear a person say that he cares for no books except novels, I always think that if only he had a little of my friend's keen, observant, thoughtful spirit, his novel-reading would become to him a most valuable means of education.

While speaking of novels, I should like to put in a plea for some of the great novel writers of a former generation. One hears it said, for instance, that it is no longer the fashion to read Sir Walter Scott. That is a sad thing to hear, because it would seem to indicate that the taste of the public has degenerated. What people seem to like now-a-days is something short and highly spiced. They buy the stories which have in them the qualities one finds in a piece of rich confectionery; and some prefer those which have a still more unwholesome flavour. Well Scott is neither short, nor highly spiced, nor sickly sweet; but he has the great merit for those who can appreciate it, of being thoroughly wholesome from beginning to end. Mere wholesomeness, taken by itself, will not perhaps induce anyone to read him. But Scott is more than wholesome, he is strong, human, fresh, inspiring. His books have the same effect on the mind that a mountain walk has upon the body. If it is true that people do not read him now-a-days, they are certainly losing one of the greatest and finest pleasures that reading can confer. As an item of personal experience, I may tell you that within recent years I have re-read most of Scott's novels, having read them the first time when I was a boy, and too young to appreciate their finer qualities, and certainly I can recollect few literary pleasures so great as that which I enjoyed from thus reading a second time the works of this great and noble spirit. To make acquaintance with a mind like Scott's is an education in itself. That pleasure is all the greater after we have become accustomed to the more modern styles of fiction. Our modern novelists, at least the best of them, make their stories turn upon some one or more of the great problems of life, and the brooding on these problems often gives a morbid and false effect to these pictures. Now, one of the great merits of Scott is that he has no problems. He deals with humanity as a living reality, whose end is to live, as Shakespeare does; he has very simple but lofty ideals of character; he is the foe of everything mean, base, sordid, and diseased; the friend of what is generous, large-minded, strong, and courageous, and in consequence there is probably no writer of ancient or modern times whose books are more helpful to making manly men and womanly women.

But to return to my main point, which is this—that whatever a person's tastes in reading may be, he should not allow himself to read without an object. The reading, which simply consists of tit-bits here and there, is simply a way of killing time. But if a person has even half-an-hour at his disposal every day, he should so select his books as to make his reading lead up to the mastery of something, although that something may be small. Let him, for instance, take a single author; a poet—Wordsworth, Tennyson, Longfellow; a prose writer—Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin—and let him make it his object to become thoroughly acquainted with the works of that author. A sound knowledge of one author may be easily acquired by persons who have very little time at their disposal, and that sound knowledge of *one* is worth infinitely more than a scrappy knowledge of *many*. Or let him take a subject in which he feels an interest: the history of his native town, the botany of his garden, the geology of the district, the political development of his country, or some period of its

development. There is no reason why he should not consult his tastes in the matter. It is not necessary for him to force himself to read on some subject for which he has no natural liking. But no one is so intellectually dead as not to have a liking for something worth knowing about, which liking, if he follows it up, may become his education. Let him then turn his reading on to *that*, and I see every reason to believe that if he perseveres, even though his reading leisure be very small, he will in course of time gain that mastership along a special line, which is always such a pleasure and profit, both to the possessor of it, and to other people as well. It has been said that a man ought to know something of everything, and everything of something; a thorough knowledge of one thing, and a general knowledge of many. Now, which of these two ought we to aim at first? I answer, unhesitatingly, the thorough knowledge of one. Take care of your thorough knowledge, and your general knowledge will take care of itself. The mistake is often made by readers of beginning by reading a bit about everything, in the hope that proficiency will somehow come of itself. Such persons fail all round. They do not even become generally well-informed; because as they flit from one topic to another, they forget what has gone before, and to the end of their days they never get below the surface in regard to any single thing.

In conclusion, I should like to say a word about the formation of a good taste in reading, which is of the very first importance. Taste is an instinct for distinguishing the good from the bad, and more especially for distinguishing books which are sincere from those written merely for effect in one way or another. He who has taste needs no advice what books to read and what to avoid. A glance through the first page or two tells the tale. Now the first step towards the formation of this natural instinct is to gain that thorough knowledge of one great author of which I spoke just now. Take, for instance, a poet like Tennyson, or a prose writer like Ruskin, whose excellence is unquestioned. If a person knows his Tennyson or his Ruskin well, knows him so well that his mind has become saturated with the excellence of his author, then that person will have a kind of unconscious standard of excellence in his mind, so that whenever he finds in his hands a book written in a false or small spirit, he will instinctively perceive its falseness or its smallness. I do not say this is *all* that is necessary for the formation of a sound taste. But it is an indispensable part of the all: it is the most important step, and it is one which every careful reader can take.

A sound taste in regard to literature is of the highest value, because it leads to a sound taste in regard to life. A man whose reading has taught him the instinct which distinguishes a good book from a bad one is very likely to have the further instinct for distinguishing what is noble in conduct from what is base. There is an enormous field of human conduct for which you can lay down no moral rule, when the right and the wrong can only be found out by good taste. This is the case in regard to matters where people's feelings are concerned, and they are concerned in most things under the sun. Therefore Matthew Arnold was right when he named the study of literature as one of the most powerful aids in the formation of right habits of conduct.

Keep your Troubles Sacred.

A worthy wife of forty years' standing, and whose life was not all made up of sunshine and peace, gave the following sensible and impressive advice to a married pair of her acquaintance. The advice is so good and so well suited to all married people, as well as those who intend entering that state, that we here publish it for the benefit of such persons:

Preserve sacredly the privacies of your own house, your married state, and your heart. Let not father or mother, sister or brother, or any third person, ever presume to come in between you two, or to share the joys and sorrows that belong to you two alone. With God's help build your own quiet world, not allowing your dearest earthly friend to be the confident of aught that concerns your domestic peace. Let moments of alienation, if they occur, be healed at once. Never, no, never speak of it outside, but to each other confess, and all will come out right. Never let the morrow's sun still find you at variance. Review and renew your vow; it will do you good, and thereby your souls will grow together, cemented in that love which is stronger than death, and you will become truly one.

Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture," considered as Parables.

V.—THE LAMP OF LIFE.

"Things in other respects alike, as in their substance, or uses, or outward forms, are noble or ignoble in proportion to the fulness of the life which either they themselves enjoy, or of whose action they bear the evidence, as sea sands are made beautiful by their bearing the seal of the motion of the waters. And this is especially true of all objects which bear upon them the impress of the highest order of creative life, that is to say, of the mind of man; they become noble or ignoble in proportion to the amount of the energy of that mind which has visibly been employed upon them. But most peculiarly and imperatively does the rule hold with respect to the creations of Architecture, which being properly capable of no other life than this, and being not essentially composed of things pleasant in themselves,—as music of sweet sounds or painting of fair colours, but of inert substance,—depend, for their dignity and pleasurableness in the utmost degree, upon the vivid expression of the intellectual life which has been concerned in their production."

It can never be too much insisted upon that Life is the main business of life. We are vessels needing to be filled with the wine of life. Amid all weakness, sorrow, sin, and loss, it is life, "more life and fuller that we want." There is scarcely any condition of life, when trouble presses upon, or work tries us, or duty is felt to be difficult, but the great need is more of the life whose pulse is low, and for lack of which we faint. Even the poor suicide in seeking death, is in reality seeking to escape from the death which has imprisoned him,—the death of dissipation or disappointment; the death of madness; the death of crime; the death of despair. He is a creature filled with death instead of life. And if he only knew it, life is what he hungers for, not death. What he is weary of is the discord and presence of death.

Yet who can tell us what life is? We see its signs; can discern its presence; we know what it is to overflow with life and what it is to be scant of life, but who has fathomed its secret? How life begins; how it organises each living thing "after its kind;" how it gives it the power of assimilating as food things outside of itself; of all this our experiments and observation tell us nothing. We come here upon the mystery of all mysteries. We observe its effects, but what it is in itself we know not.

The Lamp of Life, how it is kindled, what is the secret of its steady or its fitful flames, why it goes out, what has become of it when it no longer animates the body, all this is as insoluble to-day as it was to our far-off flint-splitting ancestors.

Yet some things *about* life are more clearly seen now than then, and among others nothing is more noticeable than this, its infinity of variation, its independence, its originality. Life to be life is always itself—a new thing and a different thing. Nature appears to hate nothing so much as mere uniformity. It is true there is a grand unity in nature; the same laws rule everywhere; we delight to trace the work of gravitation in the falling of the apple and in the orbits of the stars; we know that all forces are related to each other, and are only shapes and variations of one force. Intellectual progress consists in discovering the unity that underlies all diversity. Whenever we compare phenomena, no matter how distant they may be from each other in time and space, we now always expect to find unity of thought and purpose and working, and sooner or later these expectations are fulfilled.

But unity is not uniformity. As gravitation manifests itself in a thousand different ways, regulating alike the motes in a sunbeam and the unimaginable circuit of the comet, so life assumes an infinite variety of shapes, and everything in which life exists has its own differentiation from all the rest. It is original, it is independent, it is itself. How like are the blades of grass on a green lawn. Yet examine them closely and no two will be found to be exactly the same. The leaves on a great tree, all with such a family likeness that we can never mistake the leaf of an oak for the leaf of an ash, are yet, when minutely compared with each other, all distinct, in every one of them is some variation, some mark of independence. So it is with human hands and human faces. Amid the countless millions of our fellow mortals on the earth, no two have been found exactly alike. Variety seems to be an aim of nature. Life will always vary; it will be original.

So it is in the human world. He has most life who is most truly himself; he lives most fully who is the least of a copy. We do not understand human life until we see that each man is "an original;" with many points of likeness it is true, but always with something

distinctive about him, a note of differentiation, some touch of originality and independence which sooner or later may upset all our rules of measurement and take us by surprise. I have noticed that most men who pride themselves on their knowledge of human nature have a set of maxims which they think includes and explains any kind of human action. But it turns out that nobody is so foolish in dealing with human affairs as the mere maxim maker, the man who thinks he has sounded the depths of man, the man who does not know that the unexpected is sure to upset his rules of judgment. Old Polonius was such a maxim maker. He was full of admirable precepts about life and conduct. Yet when he comes to deal with men and women in whom the fountains of the deep are broken up, Hamlet calls him a prating fool. There are depths of feeling in the human heart that no maxims or precepts can fathom. There is an element of *surprise* in human nature, so that we never can be quite sure what a free human spirit will do in the crises of life.

But when men come together in great communities there is a conspiracy—unconscious, unconfessed, but very real—to quench the element which is capable of giving us a surprise, to crush out independence and individuality, to clip us all to one pattern like the box trees in a Dutch garden, to mock at anything original as eccentricity. Convention rules us, terrifies us out of any desire to be ourselves. And then we no longer live; we are mere machines for getting through so much work, for eating so many dinners, for making so many bows, for wearing the waistcoats decreed for us by fashion. And that is a state of death.

These are truths, Ruskin tells us, may be illustrated from Architecture. There is a dead architecture and there is a living architecture. The dead architecture may be known by its uniformity, its mechanical regularity and finish, its want of variation and originality. A living architecture will be known by its independence, its search for the greatest variation consistent with unity of design, so that though the finish may not be as great nor the columns as uniform, there will be more pleasure in looking at it since it bears the marks of life. Ruskin points out from many examples of noble buildings, how in long arcades of pillars and arches that give the sense of unity, each is somewhere different and not a mere copy; each witnesses to living and careful thought, and could not have been turned out of a mould; each has its own reason for being. There are purposed departures from mere symmetrical regularity, a perpetually variable fancy revealing itself, cornices and capitals and ornamentation giving signs of individuality as machine work could never do. The great architects looked to the nobility of the whole for one thing, and to the loveliness of detail for another, but never to petty regularities of measurement. Living architecture has sensation in every niche of it, and works out an effective symmetry by variations as subtle as those of nature. There are phases of Flamboyant architecture, seen in many French churches, as vivid, intense, and original in their animation as any phases of the human mind. Living architecture can never be turned out by machinery; men must put their heart into it, and work *as* men, and then, though they be not the most perfect workmen, there will be that in their work which is beyond all price; it will be plainly seen that some places they have delighted in more than others, that there has been a pause and a care about them; and then there will come careless bits, and fast bits, and here the chisel will have struck hard, and there lightly, but all a thousand times more living and entertaining than if turned out with perfect precision by some moulding machine, since it bears the impress of a man's hand and heart and mind, a man's virtues and faults, and varies infinitely.

Now a living soul is not moulded in a machine to one pattern. He is individual, he varies, he is himself. But custom, fashion, cowardice, convention, and the crowd are in a conspiracy against individuality. "Man's true life," says Ruskin,

"is like that of lower organic beings, the independent force by which he moulds and governs external things; it is a force of assimilation which converts everything around him into food, or into instruments, and which, however humbly or obediently it may listen to or follow the guidance of superior intelligence, never forfeits its own authority as a judging principle, as a will capable either of obeying or rebelling. His false life is, indeed, but one of the conditions of death or stupor, but it acts, even where it cannot be said to animate, and is not always known from the true. It is that life of custom and accident in which many of us pass much of our time in the world; that life in which we do what we have not

proposed, and speak what we do not mean, and assent to what we do not understand; that life which is overlaid by the weight of things external to it, and is moulded by them, instead of assimilating them; that, which instead of growing and blossoming under any wholesome dew, is crystallised over with it, as with hoar-frost, and becomes to the true life what an arborescence is to a tree, a candied agglomeration of thoughts and habits foreign to it, brittle, obstinate and icy, which can neither bend nor grow, but must be crushed and broken to bits, if it stands in our way. All men are liable to be in some degree frost-bitten in this sort; all are partly encumbered and crusted over with idle matter; only, if they have real life in them, they are always breaking this bark away in noble rents, until it becomes, like the black stripes upon the birch tree, only a witness of their own inward strength."

But there are so many who have no real life, who have never dared to be themselves, to think their own thoughts and live out their own convictions. All their effort has been and is to be exactly like everybody else of their rank and class, to be copies, good copies it may be, and even copies of that which in itself is good, but still copies. Any trace of originality in any of their fellows is a sign of something dangerous.

Now of course we must all of us be imitators of the excellence of the past. The experience, the history, the literature, the examples of life are for our instruction and enriching. We can none of us be independent of our environment, nor of the past lying behind us and influencing us so strongly in the present. Custom rightly counts for much. We cannot set at defiance all the conventions. We must respect the ways and habits which have been built up by centuries of social effort, we must respect the common-sense of most. But all this is not to enslave us. There is a noble and an ignoble imitation.

"It is no sign of deadness in a present art that it borrows or imitates, but only if it borrows without paying interest, or if it imitates without choice. The art of a great nation, which is developed without any acquaintance with nobler examples than its own early efforts furnish, exhibits always the most consistent and comprehensible growth, and perhaps is regarded usually as peculiarly venerable in its self-origination. But there is something to my mind more majestic yet in the life of an architecture like that of the Lombards, rude and infantine in itself, and surrounded by fragments of a nobler art of which it is quick in admiration and ready in imitation, and yet so strong in its own new instincts that it re-constructs and re-arranges every fragment that it copies or borrows into harmony with its own thoughts,—a harmony at first disjointed and awkward, but completed in the end, and fused into perfect organisation; all the borrowed element being subordinated to its own primal, unchanged life. I do not know any sensation more exquisite than the discovering of the evidence of this magnificent struggle into independent existence, the detection of the borrowed thoughts, nay, the finding of the actual blocks and stones carved by other hands and in other ages, wrought into the new walls, with a new expression and purpose given to them, like the blocks of unsubdued rocks (to go back to our former simile) which we find in the heart of the lava current, great witnesses to the power which has fused all but those calcined fragments into the mass of its homogenous fire.

It is true we are all dependent on each other, and that is a truth never to be overlooked. But dependence is only laudable when it nourishes independence. Every poet, every great writer, is dependent on all the past. Shelley and Tennyson could never have written as they have but for Homer, Virgil, Spenser, and Shakespeare. Yet no poets were ever more original. They assimilated what they were dependent on and then used it for new births. Spenser helped Tennyson to become Tennyson. The labours of others which bless us are not to relieve us from personal effort. Alas! there are men whose whole art of living consists in avoiding that much to be dreaded thing—individuality. They take their politics, their religion, their social standards, their literary judgments, their artistic canons as provided by the brains of others, and they glide through existence with a minimum of mental exertion. They have a name to live, and are dead. In such a state the Lamp of Life is slowly extinguished. You only live when you live as an original son of God, whom God proposes to delight in as a gardener delights in a new flower.

A May Wish.

Go, feed your soul on meadow sweets,
And bide with cowslips all the day;
The happy moment swiftly fleets,
Go, make you merry while you may!

The apple-bloom of pink and white,
The May-flowers bursting from their stems,
The varied hues in shade and light,—
These be your country diadems.

The sense that words cannot express
Of peace without, of peace within,
Of one-ness with the blessedness
Of all things,—this be yours to win.

Then go, and breathe this sense around
That meek-eyed daisies daily speak,—
This calm contentment you have found,
But other sorry mortals seek.

H. HAROLD JOHNSON.

The Wit and Humour of George Eliot.

I

A tallow dip, of the long-eight description, is an excellent thing in the kitchen candlestick, and Betty's nose and eye are not sensitive to the difference between it and the finest wax; it is only when you stick it in the silver candlestick, and introduce it into the drawing room, that it seems plebeian, dim, and ineffectual. Alas for the worthy man who, like that candle, gets himself into the wrong place! It is only the very largest souls who will be able to appreciate and pity him—who will discern and love sincerity of purpose amid all the bungling feebleness of achievement.

I have all my life had a sympathy for mongrel, ungainly dogs, who are nobody's pets, and I would rather surprise one of them by a pat and a pleasant morsel, than meet the condescending advances of the loveliest Skye terrier, who has his cushion by my lady's chair. That, to be sure, is not the way of the world; if it happens to see a fellow of fine proportions and aristocratic mien, who makes no *faux pas*, and wins golden opinions from all sorts of men, it straightway picks out for him the loveliest of unmarried women, and says—There would be a proper match! Not all all, say I; let that successful, well-shapen, discreet and able gentleman put up with something less than the best in the matrimonial department, and let the sweet woman go to make sunshine and a soft pillow for the poor devil whose legs are not models, whose efforts are often blunders, and who in general gets more kicks than halfpence.

We cannot reform our forefathers.

People who love downy preachers are apt not to think of the stone, and sometimes jar their teeth terribly against it.

Errors look so very ugly in persons of small means—one feels they are taking quite a liberty in going astray; whereas people of fortune may naturally indulge in a few delinquencies. "They've got the money for it," as the girl said of her mistress who had made herself ill with pickled salmon.

They say a green Yule makes a fat churchyard, but so does a white Yule, too, for that matter. When the stool's rotten enough no matter who sits on it.—*Mrs. Hackit.*

Hatred is like fire—it makes even light rubbish deadly.

"I've nothing to say again' her piety, my dear; but I know very well I shouldn't like her to cook my victual. When a man comes in hungry an' tired, piety won't feed him, I reckon. Hard carrots 'ull lie heavy on his stomach, piety or no piety. I called in one day when she was dishin' up Mr. Tryan's dinner, an' I could see the potatoes was as watery as watery. It's right enough to be speritial—I'm no enemy to that; but I like my potatoes mealy, I don't see as anybody 'ull go to heaven the sooner for not digestin' their dinner providin' they don't die sooner, as mayhap Mr. Tryan will, poor dear man.—*Mrs. Limet.*

There's no rule so wise but what it's a pity for somebody or other.

It's poor foolishness to run down your enemies.

It's a strange thing to think of a man as can lift a chair with his teeth, and walk fifty mile on end, trembling and turning hot and cold at only a firm one woman out of all the rest i' the world. It's a mystery we can give no account of; but no more we can of the sprouting of the seed, for that matter.—*Adam Bede.*

I began to see as all this weighing and sifting what this text means and that text means, and whether folks are saved all by God's grace, or whether there goes an ounce o' their own will to 't, was no part o' real religion at all. You may talk o' these things for hours on end, and you'll only be the more coxy and conceited for 't. —*Adam Bede.*

If we're men, and have men's feelings, I reckon we must have men's troubles. We can't be like the birds, as fly from their nest as soon as they've got their wings, and never know their kin when they see 'em, and get a fresh lot every year.—*Adam Bede.*

The Strength of the Weak.

Every noble soul longs for an active share in the great work of the world. And there are many to whom it is a great grief and burden that by sickness, or seclusion, or stress of circumstances, they seem shut of from doing anything considerable for their fellowmen.

Now, for such there is one truth full of comfort. Of all the forces by which men work upon each other, incomparably the greatest is right living. It is not genius that does most for the progress of mankind; it is not culture, or intellectual power, or the possession of rare opportunity; it is simple goodness. The man or woman, although hidden and solitary, who lives a pure, unselfish, holy life, is wielding a power in the universe, beside which all other forms of power are insignificant.

We are to remember that the things that most impress the senses are not really the greatest things. The thunderbolt is of far less account than the unseen, all-pervading electric currents; the earthquake is a trifle compared with the universal force of gravitation. So, in the moral world, it is not the great geniuses, soldiers, statesmen, who chiefly shape the course of things; it is rather the myriad lives that go unnoticed and unrecorded.

We very dimly and partially discern the ways by which men work upon each other. But we get glimpses of forces lying below the surface. We gather the rudiments of a fine spiritual chemistry. And one of its laws is, that moral force is never wasted. No man wins a victory over baseness in himself, but he sets in motion waves of ever-widening influence. The self-conquest, the humility, the sweet disposition, the patient waiting on God, that grow up and blossom in hidden lives, are fountains of power. It is through such channels as these that the Divine Spirit pours itself upon the world, and is bringing out of chaos a celestial order and beauty.

We can partly trace the ways in which unseen and solitary lives work their effect on the great outer world. The subtlest and strongest influence among men is the unconscious influence of character. It is not our deliberate and painstaking efforts to lead men into goodness that are most effectual, though they too are essential. But it is by seeing and feeling the daily goodness of others that hearts are chiefly won. There is many an invalid, many a woman, who seems to herself but a burden upon others, who sheds a celestial atmosphere about her. No one comes near her without growing purer, gentler, more unselfish. In her weakness she is stronger than many a man who marches through the community resistless as a steam-engine, building up, casting down, working all things to his will. The mighty structures he rears may all be but hay and stubble for the flame to sweep away; or if anything endures it may be as an incumbrance and a curse. But that saintly life, in its seclusion and helplessness, is sowing in other hearts the seeds of celestial harvests, that shall multiply their blessings so long as Time endures.

In one respect especially is there at this time saving power in true holiness of life. Waves of doubt are sweeping over men. The temptation to believe only in the things that are seen, to let go of everything above and beyond this life, besets men with subtle and marvellous power. They must be saved from it by the living contact of hearts that *know* God. There are those in whose souls the light shines strong and clear. Overthrow their faith by argument? Sooner persuade a man who stands in the sunlight that darkness reigns supreme! Such souls are indeed the lights of the world. It is not argument, it is not scholarly research, it is not dogmatic authority, it is not ecclesiastical pomp and splendour, that can draw men to a living faith; it is the touch of the Spirit of God. And that Spirit uses, as its chief instrument upon men, the radiant lives of those in whom it has already made its abode.

We partly trace the ways in which holy lives have power over the world even when they appear most weak. But we can only very imperfectly follow the process. We see but a little of the wonderful plan which God is working out. We know this—that He administers the whole universe through all the ages to fulfil a mighty purpose of love. We know that He employs means utterly beyond our comprehension, and that, with infinite resource of wisdom and patience and Almighty love, He is carrying out His great design. And we know that we can be workers together with Him. How we are of use, in what way our little labours are taken up into

His vast designs, we understand but very dimly. But of this we are sure, the one thing He asks of us is to be faithful to His law in our hearts, to learn the lessons He sets us, whether of achievement or endurance, of toil or of waiting. We know that He lets nothing which is wrought in us be lost. And, under whatever stress we may be, this is our sublime consolation, not only that we are led of Him toward blessings unspeakable, but that He calls us to share with Him His Divine task of bringing the universe unto Himself.

A Holiday Letter

FROM THE WEST HIGHLANDS.

ARDGOUR, N. B.

"MY DEAR ——

"I promised to let you know how we fare in the wilds of the West Highlands. Well, here be no luxurious, expensive hotels; no tribe of greedy lodging-house keepers with a defective sense of meum and tuum; no niggers; no blatant bands murdering the music of nature; no trippers, no touts, no tumblers, no 'Arrys and 'Arriets, no swarm of would-be fashionables wearing out their season's dresses, no bathing machines, no barrel organs, no Salvation lasses, *no nothink*, as the boy said, of all that racket and blare which makes the ordinary watering place a torture to the mind seeking quiet and rest. There isn't a lodging-house proper in the place and only one inn—think of that, Sir Wilfred—in four-and-twenty miles! We have rooms in a Highland cottage of the better sort, which is also the village shop. The Schoolmaster also lets his little house during the school holidays. That is about the extent of accommodation for visitors, so that a large family arriving in search of rooms would, to say the least, be badly off. To us one of the charms of the place is its entire restfulness. How good it is to forget the madding crowd! How delicious to get out of the narrow streets and the cramping life of the town into the spacious liberty of hills and glens and moors and wide stretches of sea. To wander a whole day amid these beautiful scenes and meet only a shepherd or the postman—think of that! To drink in this invigorating air, to breathe the sweet, keen breath of pines, to lie at full length in the heather and watch the white clouds sailing against a sky of matchless blue, to lose oneself in the tall bracken, six and seven feet high, to follow the course of a tumbling stream to where it rises in a hollow of the hills, to watch the interminable play of colour on these western Lochs, all this is at once a refreshing and joy.

"Our cottage is delightful. We have great fires morning and evening—I hope you like the smell of peats—for up here, the nights are cold. Wonderful to tell our little parlour has a piano, which, although atrociously out of tune, affords us a great outlet for high spirits and Highland songs, which we swear to be the finest music in the world! Our hostess, like most of the crofters in Ardgour, is an educated woman. Think of finding in an English cottage, rental ten pounds a year, Josephus, Milton, Fielding, Shakespeare, Byron, Longfellow, Tennyson, and a goodly assortment of works by William Black, Walter Besant, &c., &c. Like many Highland families, there have been boys of the household who have gone straight from the village school to the Universities, and have become ministers in the Kirk.

"Our only housekeeping difficulty is to provide for the pot! The nearest butcher is at Fort William, ten miles away, while our bread comes from Oban, twenty-four miles to the south of us. Fruit and vegetables—barring potatoes—come with our bread. But we have our own cow, and such milk as 'the best governed city in the world' only knows of in its dreams. When we are very badly off K., like Peter, says 'I go a fishing;' and, if he has luck, he brings home a dish of Saithe; but if thy soul longs for dainties, flesh-pots of Egypt, etc., Ardgour is not its paradise.

"On the whole, I think 'tis the most beautiful place I know for a holiday in Great Britain. From the window where I write I look up to Kiel, the highest peak of the Ardgour mountains; to the left, I see Donald's Crag; away to the right is the truncated sugar-loaf top of Ben Nevis; while on the other side of the Loch the Glencoe hills stand out in magnificent array. Within a few hundred yards, at the foot of Kiel, are half-a-dozen little tarns, and the beautiful glens of Gour and Scaddle are within easy reach. In two minutes we are down to the shore, where

we see the Loch stretching away for 20 miles, with Mull in the soft and tender distance. With half-an-hour's rowing we land 'In far Lochaber.' You know it is William Black's country, and as he would say, behold!—all the panorama of colour he has so marvellously painted.

"And what more shall I say? Shall I tell you of the bare-footed lassies, with their shy, pleasant greetings, and their daily visits to our shops for 'bulls-eyes,' 'peppermints,' and other delights, under the generic name of 'sweeties?' of the soft speech and fine courteous manners of the Highlanders? of the Laird and his pleasant grounds and 'policies' thrown open to the village? of the 'club' that meets opposite our gate, when candles are lighted, and we troll out 'The Bonnets o' Dundee?' of the legends of Flora Macdonald? of the Scotch rain which just now is getting up a fine spate in Scaddle? of the great deer forest at the back of Kiel? Nay, you must come and 'taste and see' for yourself all these delights, and a score of others, which are to be had just for the trouble of taking a tourist ticket.

"Faithfully yours,

"———."

Carlyle on Burns.

The Centenary of the death of Robert Burns (July 14, 1896) has been kept by Scotchmen with becoming memorials. Not Scotchmen only, but the English-speaking race the world over has taken occasion by the hand to express its indebtedness to Scotland's greatest singer. Indeed no country ever had such a song-writer as Scotland had in Burns. We may regret that he did not discipline his intellect to give us some great work of art, on the scale of Goethe or Milton; we may regret that he never reared a noble and spacious temple, but spent his time just in cutting and polishing little gems. But these gems are of countless price. His songs are matchless. Written in all the sweetness and strength of the Scotch dialect they are yet not for Scotchmen only, but for universal man. Their main characteristic is that they express what is most permanent in humanity, those primary affections, those paramount relations of life that cannot change while man is man. In this they are wholly unlike so many songs which deal with the changing aspects of society. As phases of social life change these are forgotten. But no time can superannuate the subjects which Burns has sung; they are rooted in the primary strata, which are steadfast. The passions with which they throb and thrill are also primary. The feeling is not subtilised and refined away till it has lost its power and fulness, but given at first hand as it comes warm from within. They are simply and universally human, felt by men of all classes and condition alike. They are mainly songs that in their immediate setting celebrate the life of the common people; songs full of the pathos, of the humours, of the sorrows and affections, of the toils and amusements of his own class, yet with such a wide, universal humanity, that all the world laughs and weeps with this Ayrshire ploughman. Songs of love, songs of patriotism, songs of feasting, songs of parting, songs that are all tears, songs that are "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles," songs that are satires, songs that bewitch us with their music or choke us with their grief, these he threw off by the hundred, and these have given him his place among the immortals.

God be thanked for the gifts he gave to man by Robert Burns.

But there has been a tendency in some quarters to glorify Burns as the best of men as well as the greatest of songsters. That particular note of adulation is to be regretted. They are no friends of Burns who would canonise him as hero, saint, martyr. They do but challenge the counter verdict, and force men to recall facts which if they cannot forget they would fain leave in silence. Let us leave him to the wiser, truer, kindlier judgment of heaven. For the rest nothing has been written on the fate and character of Burns more just and generous than Carlyle's essay, which we commend to our readers. Here is an extract full of sound and sympathetic judgment.

"Contemplating the sad end of Burns,—how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy,—generous minds have sometimes figured to themselves, with a reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him; that by counsel, true affection, and friendly ministrations, he might have been saved to

himself and the world. But it seems dubious whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual could have lent Burns any effectual help.

"Counsel—which seldom profits any one—he did not need. In his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well, perhaps, as any man ever did; but the persuasion which would have availed him lies not so much in the head as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted much to implant it.

"As to money, we do not believe that this was his essential want; or well see that any private man could have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, that two men, in any rank of society, can hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it as a necessary gift, without an injury to the moral entireness of one or both. But so stands the fact:—Friendship, in the old heroic sense of the term, no longer exists; it is in reality no longer expected, or recognised as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced 'patronage'—that is, pecuniary or economic furtherance — to be 'twice cursed;' cursing him that gives and him that takes! And thus, in regard to outward matters, it has become the rule, as, in regard to inward, it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself. Such is the principle of modern Honour; naturally enough growing out of the sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality.

"We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall readily admit, however, that much was to be done for Burns; that many a poisoned arrow might have been warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with fewer pangs. Still, we do not think that the blame of Burns's failure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more, rather than with less kindness than it usually shows to such men. It has ever, we fear, shown but small favour to its teachers: hunger and nakedness, perils and reviling, the prison, the poison-chalice, the cross, have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for wisdom—the welcome with which it has treated those who have come to enlighten and purify it. Homer and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles, belong to old days; but the world's martyrology was not completed with these. So neglected, so 'persecuted they the prophets,' not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age; that he has no right to expect kindness, but rather is bound to do it; that Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of goodness; and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

"Where, then, does it lie? We are forced to answer, WITH HIMSELF: it is his inward, not his outward misfortunes, that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise; seldom is a life morally wrecked, but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement,—some want, less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions no creature without implanting in it the strength needful for its action and duration; least of all does she neglect her masterpiece and darling — the poetic soul! Neither can we believe that it is in the power of any external circumstances utterly to ruin the mind of a man; nay—if proper wisdom be given him—even so much as to affect its essential health and beauty. The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is death; nothing more can lie in the cup of human woe: yet many men, in all ages, have triumphed over death, and led it captive; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves—into a seal and immortal consecration for all that their past life had achieved. What has been done may be done again; nay, it is but the degree, and not the kind, of such heroism, that differs in different seasons: for, without some portion of this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness —of SELF-DENIAL in all its forms, no great man, in any scene or time, has ever attained to be good."

The Popular Heaven!

Perhaps nothing more clearly exhibits the true nature of the popular creed, the moral degradation its belief involves, than its teaching about heaven. The heaven it holds out for our acceptance is a place whose joys cannot be accepted without surrendering some of the best impulses of our nature, *e.g.*, sympathy with the lost and suffering; and our consequent degradation morally.

For what does the ordinary view in fact teach? It bids us look forward to a heaven from which our friends, our neighbours, our wives, our brothers, our sisters are (very many of them) excluded for ever, shut up in agony, while we enjoy the delights of Paradise; we exult, but they agonise; we are in bliss, they are in torment; while we either know not, or knowing, care not for their woe. If this be not selfishness at its height, what is selfishness? If it be not baseness, what is baseness?

Take a common case. A mother, devout and patient, watches over a dying son. A devoted wife clings to her departing husband. They have been caught by a sudden casualty, or, swept away by a rapid illness, they have given no proof of repentance, and so dying pass into endless, hopeless misery, while wife and mother in turn pass into heaven? But how could the latter be for a single moment happy in such a heaven? Imagine a mother thrilled through with bliss while (near or far off it matters not) her child is in the grip of devils for ever; a wife joining in the angelic harmonies while her husband eternally blasphemes. Such is the heaven of the ordinary creed, if it be not something worse still, an exulting over the torments of the lost. To show that this is no mere figure of speech, I append a few extracts. They are from sources as widely apart as a medieval schoolman and a modern puritan. 'That the saints may *enjoy* their beautitude more thoroughly, and give more abundant thanks for it to God, *a perfect sight* of the punishment of the damned is granted them.'—*St. Thomas—Summa* iii. Take another instance from Peter Lombard—'Therefore the elect shall go forth to see the torments of the impious, seeing which they will not be grieved, but will be *satiated with joy* at the sight of the *unutterable* calamity of the impious.'—*Senten.* iv. 50. Again, hear another from a modern divine—'The *view of the misery of the damned* will double the ardour of the love and gratitude of the saints in Heaven.' This is the opinion of the once famous Jonathan Edwards. Another American divine uses even stronger language—'This display of the divine character,' said S. Hopkins, 'will be most *entertaining* to all who love God—will give them the highest and most ineffable pleasure; should the fire of this eternal punishment cease, it would in a great measure obscure the light of Heaven, and *put an end to a great part of the happiness* and glory of the blessed.'—*Works*, vol. iv., *Serm.* xiii. To this popular creed has degraded the ministers of Christ, to penning passages like the above (easily to be multiplied) passages, than which all literature does not contain anything more revolting."

Horrible as all this is, it is, I believe, *inevitable* on the ordinary view that God's friends should regard with pleasure those judgments which are, as it teaches, the expression of His will.

Advisory Committees.

The discussions in *The Inquirer* on the action of the London Advisory Committee, in the case of Mr. E. A. Voysey, raises very grave and important questions. We would, to begin with, remind our readers of the facts. Wishing to enter our ministry, Mr. Voysey, son of the Rev. C. Voysey, the well-known minister of the Theistic Church, Swallow Street, London, submitted his credentials to the Advisory Committee, and in due time there appeared in the denominational journals "A Ministerial Commendation," testifying to the character and ability of the applicant. It appears, however, that the decision of the committee was not unanimous, and Mr. Spears, one of its prominent members, hastened to inform the Unitarian public that he entirely disapproved of the "Commendation." The grounds upon which he felt moved to take this course are stated by him in these words:—

"*I make this protest on no private or personal grounds, but simply because Mr. Voysey, in the presence of the committee, in the most frank way, declared he was not a Christian, and in the ministry would not profess Christianity.*"

It is not said whether Mr. Voysey volunteered this statement, or whether it was made in response to inquiries by some member of the committee as to his theological position. Neither does it affect the issue, *i.e.*, that Mr. Spears would exclude a man from the pulpits of our churches on doctrinal and theological grounds.

It appears to us that Mr. Spears, and those who think with him, have a very inadequate conception of the Free Church position. We disclaim the government of the churches by bishops; we equally refuse to submit ourselves to the yoke of assemblies, synods, and presbyteries. We claim to be democratic, self-governing communities. We claim for each little group of worshippers forming a church, the right to control their own affairs, the responsibility of choosing and supporting their own minister. We have refused the bond of union to be found in subscription to creeds, names, and confessions of faith. Each church must settle for itself its own terms of communion. The theological position of any given minister is a matter between him and his congregation alone. It is not for other churches, or bodies, or advisory committees, to say that our churches must only choose men of a certain theological school. It is sympathy in these principles of Free Church life that unites us together for fellowship and common work.

Now any advisory committee which asks doctrinal questions, and gives or refuses its "commendation" to a candidate for our pulpits on doctrinal grounds, sins against the fundamental idea of our Free Churches. It is the business of advisory committees, *on their present basis*, to inquire only into character, protecting congregations from men whose record proves them to be unfit on moral grounds for the position of the ministry. The work of such a committee is simply to keep out black sheep. To catechise the sheep on the relative merits of mountain and meadow pastures, and to exclude those who swear by the one rather than the other is to set up once more, in a particularly offensive form, that hateful thing, doctrinal tests. In arguing this matter we must not be supposed to identify ourselves with Mr. Voysey's theological views. How far he is his father's disciple we do not know. Certainly we have very little sympathy with that gentleman's estimate of the character of Jesus Christ. While admiring to the full Mr. Voysey's fearlessness and sincerity, we could wish that he had a little more of the sweet reasonableness of Jesus in his manner of controversy, and a little more insight into the spirit, with a little less slavery to the letter of New Testament documents. But if the case in question were that of Mr. Voysey himself, and not of his son, of whom we know nothing, our judgment would be the same. It would be impertinent, and a betrayal of the first principles of Free Church life, for Mr. Spears or any advisory committee to endeavour to close our pulpits to the author of "The Sling and the Stone," on account of his theological position. That is a question only for the particular church inviting Mr. Voysey's services. As a member of a given church, Mr. Spears would be quite right in enquiring into Mr. Voysey's doctrinal views, and voting against his appointment to the pulpit of that church, if those views were to him repellent and erroneous. But for Mr. Spears or anybody else to attempt to dictate to our churches at large doctrinal conditions of appointment to the ministry, is to set up a modern Inquisition, or a new Court of Triers, of a most objectionable type, because not safe-guarded by strictly defined rules as their predecessors. It needs to be emphasised once and again that you cannot combine the advantages of the Free Church and the Presbyterian systems in one and the same denomination. You must make your choice. Each system has its advantages and disadvantages. But if your choice falls on the principle of freedom, then you must take it with all its dangers. Some of us believe that at the worst its dangers are less dangerous than those of the Presbyterian system, and that they are at their best the education of freedom in its responsibilities. Any attempt to relieve individual churches of the burden of responsibility in the choice of ministers is a profound mistake. They, and they alone, must settle the conditions on which their pulpits shall be filled.

The present case amply justifies the attitude of those who from the first have been opposed to these advisory committees. They said, "the inevitable tendency of such bodies is to magnify their office, to enlarge their scope, to pass from considerations of character to those of opinion and doctrine." This has been the history of

such committees in the Independent churches, and hence they have become discredited. Moreover, there is no proof that they succeed in keeping questionable characters out of the ministry. Certainly their *imprimatur* has been given to more than one candidate who has subsequently dragged our fair name in the mire. Further, the office of an advisory committee on character is to a large extent rendered useless by the law of libel. It will be noticed that these committees only make a public announcement of the candidates they accept and commend. They do not, and they dare not, publish the names of men they reject for lack of character. They would immediately find themselves in a court of law. They cannot let all the world know who are the black sheep, and so they fail to protect our pulpits from unworthy intruders. The old-fashioned method of making private inquiries from trusted men among us, was, we are persuaded, more effective than the new method for its own purpose.

We are satisfied that careful investigation would show that a larger proportion of black sheep has passed through the advisory committee gate, than through the old-fashioned, obscure, yet more strictly guarded entrances.

Lastly, when all is said and done, the churches will have their own way. Mr. Spears may protest "till the cows come home," but if the pulpit of Highgate Church should become vacant (which Heaven forefend) there would be nothing to prevent the Highgate congregation from inviting Mr. Voysey to become their minister, and not all the advisory committees in the world could forbid the banns.

A denomination that includes a Theodore Parker among its *Dii majores* cannot exclude a Voysey.

King Charles II. once said to that great man, Mr. John Milton, "Do not you think your blindness is a judgment upon you for having written in defence of my father's murder?" "Sir," answered the poet, "it is true I have lost my eyes; but if all calamitous providences are to be considered as judgments, your majesty should remember that your royal father lost his head."

Behold a Sower went Forth to Sow.

With swinging arm, the Sower spreads
Across the furrows, where he treads
For hour on hour a rain of seed;
Whilst random sprites are giving heed
To wayside gain, from his God-like mood
To scatter abroad such wealth of good.
A plain-told tale of long ago
The Sower's story is we know.

With furtive eyes, the fowls of air,
No moment lost, engorge a share;
And Jehu-sun bethinks him a snack
His steeds will crop by to-morrow's track.
Then thistles and thorns, an Arab clan
Of born marauders, wait their plan
To stifle and slay, ere summer swell,
The heads of grain that near them fell.
'Tis a story told to times gone by,
How the Sower went his craft to ply.

And the Sower fain, he scatters still;
If sowing stop 'twill idle the mill.
And he hears the harvest land exclaim,
"Seed-sower good! be not to blame;
If little you give, we little can grow:
You must exert yourself and throw."
'Tis a story dim, from an ancient day,
Of the Sower's will and the Sower's way.

He casts it near, and he casts it far,
He sows let it thrive—he sows let it mar,
He dashes it thick, he dwindles it thin;
He sows let him fail, he sows let him win;
For the Lord of the Harvest is saying, "Man!
I'll expect of you the most I can,"
And he with full-plied breathing power
Is sowing away till the sunset hour.
A tale oft-told to the scholar young
Is word of the man, and the seed he flung.

Now the watchful birds 'gin build and brood,
And the sunbeams glare where the Sower strewed,
And the briars are budding their jaggy sides;
And these all conceive—it coincides
With profit theirs—to take and eat
The labour of others—yea! play the cheat.
But the land that's good declares 'twill give
A hundred-fold to have him live
Who stored its ridges with heartsome fruit,
To gladden man, to fatten brute;
Till the Lord of Life Himself appear,
To say, "Most faithful one! sit here,
And feast on the best of my garnered cheer."
A simple tale of long ago
The Sower's story is we know:
And who hath ears, his heart is a field,
Where the Sower's praise cannot lie concealed.

CON AMORE.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Rumpelstilzchen.

There was once a miller who was very poor, but he had a beautiful daughter. Now, it happened that he came to speak to the King, and, to give himself importance, he said to him, "I have a daughter who can spin straw into gold." The King said to the miller, "That is a talent that pleases me well; if she be as skilful as you say, bring her to-morrow to the palace and I will put her on the proof." When the maiden was brought to him he led her to a room full of straw, gave her a wheel and spindle, and said, "Now, set to work, and if by the morrow this straw shall not be spun into gold you shall die." He locked the door and left the maiden alone. The poor girl sat down disconsolate, and could not for her life think what she was to do, for she knew not—how could she?—the way to spin straw into gold, and her distress increased so much that at last she began to weep. All at once the door opened and a little man entered and said, "Good evening, my pretty miller's daughter; why are you weeping so bitterly?" "Ah!" answered the maiden, "I must spin straw into gold, and know not how to do it." The little man said, "What will you give me if I do it for you?" "My neckerchief," said the maiden. He took the neckerchief, sat down before the wheel, and grind, grind, grind—three times did he grind—and the spindle was full. Then he put another thread on and grind, grind, grind—the second was full; so he spun on till morning, when all the straw was spun and all the spindles were full of gold. The King came at sunrise and was greatly astonished and overjoyed at the sight; but it only made his heart the more greedy for gold. He put the miller's daughter into another much larger room, full of straw, and ordered her to spin it all in one night, if life were dear to her. The poor helpless maiden began to weep, when once more the door flew open, the little man appeared, and said, "What will you give me if I spin this straw into gold?" "My ring from my finger," answered the maiden. The little man took the ring, began to turn the wheel, and by the morning all the straw was spun into shining gold. The King was highly delighted when he saw it, but was not yet satisfied with the quantity of gold, so he put the damsel into a still higher room full of straw, and said, "Spin this during the night, and if you do it you shall be my wife." "For," he thought, "if she's only a miller's daughter, I shall never find a richer wife in the whole world." As soon as the damsel was alone the little man came the third time and said, "What will you give me if I again spin all this straw for you?" "I have nothing more to give you," answered the girl. "Then promise, if you become queen, to give me your first child." "Who knows how that may be, or how things may turn out between now and then?" thought the girl, but in her perplexity she could not help herself; so she promised the little man what he desired, and he spun all the straw into gold. When the king came in the morning and saw that his orders had been obeyed, he married the maiden, and the miller's beautiful daughter became a queen. After a year had passed she brought a lovely baby into the world, but quite forgot the little man, till he walked suddenly into her chamber, and said, "Give me what you promised me." The queen was frightened, and offered the dwarf all the riches of her kingdom if he would only leave her her child; but he answered, "No; something living is dearer to me than all the treasures of the world." Then the queen began to grieve and to weep so bitterly, that the little man took pity upon her and said, "I will give you three days; if in that time you can find out my name, you shall keep the child." All night long the queen thought over every name she had ever heard, and sent a messenger through the kingdom, to enquire what names were usually given to people in that country. When, next day, the little man came again, she began with Casper, Melchior, Balthazar, and repeated, each after each, all the names she knew or had heard of; but at each one the little man said "That is not my name." The second day she again sent round about, in all directions, to ask how the people were called, and repeated to the little man the strangest names she could hear of, or imagine; to each he answered always, "That is not my name." The third day the messenger returned and said, "I have not been able to find a single new name; but as I came over a high mountain by a wood, where the fox and the hare bid each other good-night, I saw a little house, and before the house was burning a little fire, and round the fire was dancing a funny little man, who hopped about on one leg, and cried out—

"To-day I brew, to-morrow I bake,
Next day the queen's child I shall take;
How glad I am that nobody knows
My name is Rumpelstilzchen."

You may guess how joyful the queen was at hearing this; and when, soon after, the little man entered and said, "Queen, what is my name?" She asked him mischievously, "Is your name Kunz?" "No." "Is your name Carl?" "No." "Are you sometimes called Rumpelstilzchen?" "A witch has told you that, a witch has told you!" shrieked the poor little man, and stamped so furiously with his right foot that it sunk into the earth up to the hip; then he seized his left foot with such violence and both hands, that he tore himself right in two.

Pippa's Song.

The year's at the spring;
The days at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

BROWNING.